

NOTES

PSEUDOCROTON TINCTORIUS MUELL. ARG., A SYNONYM OF *CAPPARIS INDICA* (L.) FAWC. & RENDLE

In the herbarium of the Field Museum (F) in Chicago is a specimen (*Friedrichsthal 1072*) collected near Managua, Nicaragua, which is an isotype of *Pseudocroton tinctorius* Muell. Arg. (Flora 55:24. 1872), a monotypic genus referred by its author to the Euphorbiaceae. This species has intrigued me for some time, because it did not look like any euphorbiaceous genus known to me, had apparently not been collected since the type, and its relationships were obscure. In the protologue, Mueller placed it near *Leucocroton* Griseb., a West Indian genus that Webster (1975) referred to the tribe Adelleae, and Pax & Hoffman (1912:96) placed it in the Chrozophoreae near such genera as *Argythamnia* P. Brown, *Ditaxis* Vahl, and *Caperonia* St.-Hil. Webster (1975) left it out of his system of the Euphorbiaceae altogether because of the poor condition of the type and the consequent difficulty in placing it satisfactorily (Webster, pers. comm.).

Recently, while looking at the Central American species of *Capparis* L., I noticed that several of the lepidote species bore a striking resemblance to *Pseudocroton tinctorius*. Further examination revealed that the isotype of that species is exactly like *Capparis indica* (L.) Fawc. & Rendle, at least in its vegetative features such as lepidote indument, short petiole, and faint but readily apparent lateral veins and rounded apex of the leaf. The specimen of *Pseudocroton* at the Field Museum unfortunately lacks flowers. Mueller's description of the flower, however, accords exactly with very young flowers of *Capparis*, the important features being a 4-parted calyx, imbricate spatulate petals that are stellately pubescent, a disc of separate, extrastaminal glands that alternate with the petals, 16–20 short stamens, and a cylindrical-ovoid rudimentary ovary. Although the last two characters do describe the immature flowers of *Capparis*, they are in contrast to the mature flowers, which have strongly exerted stamens and long-stipitate ovaries. The immaturity of the flowers also accounts for Mueller's description of the plant as dioecious.

Thus, *Pseudocroton* falls into the synonymy of *Capparis*, and *P. tinctorius* becomes a synonym of *C. indica*, which is a widespread species of the West Indies, western and southern Mexico, Central America, and northern South America. I am indebted to Dr. Hugh H. Iltis of the University of Wisconsin, authority on the Capparidaceae, for confirming my identification of the type of *P. tinctorius* as *C. indica* and for assuring me that there are no potentially complicating taxonomic problems with *C. indica*, such as the existence of a Central American segregate species over which *P. tinctorius* might have priority.

LITERATURE CITED

- PAX, F. & K. HOFFMAN. 1912. Euphorbiaceae–Acalypheae–Chrozophorineae. Pflanzenreich IV. 147. VI. (Heft 57).
WEBSTER, G. L. 1975. Conspectus of a new classification of the Euphorbiaceae. Taxon 24:593–601.
—Michael J. Huft, Department of Botany, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois 60605.